

Maurice Hinchey NEWS

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HINCHEY FIGHTS TO ADDRESS VICTIMS' UNMET NEEDS

WASHINGTON - U.S. Representative Maurice Hinchey (NY-26) today reiterated his call for increased funding for the recovery effort at the World Trade Center. Hinchey and other members of the New York delegation are fighting for an amendment that would provide funding that was promised shortly after the September 11 attacks.

"Despite his promise, the president now only wants to send \$11 billion to New York," said Hinchey. "I am sure the governor and the mayor are right when they say that this is enough to allow them to pay their bills. But the victims of the attacks have many other needs that are not being met."

Shortly after the September 11 attacks, the Bush Administration agreed that the federal government would provide \$40 billion to address the attack and its aftermath. These funds were appropriated in a bill that was signed into law on September 18. In keeping with a promise made by the president, the law states that, "not less than one-half of the \$40,000,000,000 shall be for disaster recovery activities and assistance related to the terrorist acts in New York, Virginia and Pennsylvania." Despite that language in the law, the administration has only proposed spending just over \$11 billion on recovery.

The spending plan will be voted on as a supplement to the Defense Appropriations bill that the House will consider this week. Hinchey is urging passage of an amendment he helped to write that would provide an additional \$9.7 billion and includes the following provisions:

- Reimburses COBRA-eligible workers for 100 percent of their health care premiums for twelve months and provides non-COBRA-eligible workers with Medicaid coverage for twelve months. Provides \$1.345 billion for this purpose.
- Establishes the Office of World Trade Center Attack Claims as part of the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA) to expedite claims of individuals and small businesses.
- Allocates \$6.56 billion to FEMA for activities related to the attacks in New York.
- Authorizes 26 additional weeks of unemployment insurance for workers who lost their jobs as a result of the attacks. Provides \$1.16 billion for this purpose.
- Reimburses New York State for processing Workers Compensation claims that resulted from the attacks. Provides \$195 million for this purpose.

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Congressman Maurice Hinchey

November 27, 2001

Page Two

- Provides an additional \$900 million in the Community Development Block Grant program for economic development in New York City. Includes \$10 million specifically for the tourism industry.

The amendment was defeated in the Appropriations Committee by a vote of 31-33. Hinchey and his colleagues are hoping to add the amendment when the bill is considered by the full House tomorrow. In order for that to happen the rule for debate on the bill must allow the amendment to be offered. Hinchey will testify this evening at a meeting of the Rules Committee to urge that debate on the amendment be allowed.

"We can't forget the thousands of employees and small business owners who have been devastated by the attacks," Hinchey added. "They need immediate, direct assistance. The federal government has always been generous when areas of the country have been hit by disaster. This is not the time to put a stop to that fine tradition."